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ON ART AND AESTHETICS

From Ukraine to Israel: Zoya Cherkassky on Migrant Anxiety and Disappointment

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Acclaimed—and dissident—Israeli artist Zoya Cherkassky is known for bringing together languages stemming from ‘high’ and ‘low’ cultures, pop and computer aesthetics. In her work, Cherkassky expresses her unique capacity to observe, analyse and reconstruct old truths concerning art as well as to formulate the problematics which come with the making of art today.

Born in Kiev, Ukraine in 1976, Cherkassky immigrated to Israel in 1991, and now lives and works in Tel Aviv-Yafo. This experience is reflected in her simple, down-to-earth yet humorous and ironic paintings—that deal with issues of identity and alienation as well as the clash between cultures.

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Zoya Cherkassky

The anxiety and disappointment of the migrants is shown across the domestic sphere, the school, the marketplace and other public spaces. One painting, which shows the ex-USSR citizens descending an airplane, is blatantly titled “New Victims”. Adults find it hard to integrate in the society, children are bullied. Despite such negative associations, as one article in the *Haaretz* [notes](#), Cherkassky’s characters show “no nostalgia here for the world they left behind”. In a diptych called “School Mobbing”, a Jewish child is humiliated in a Soviet school, alongside a Russian child humiliated in an Israeli school. Both cultures/societies are held as mirror images and the question of true home remains open.

Cherkassky attended the School of Visual Theater, Jerusalem in 1996-1997 and the HaMidrasha School of Art, Beit Berl College, Kfar Saba in 1997-1999. Until 2002, she worked in collaboration with artist Ruti Nemet. Since 2011, she has been a member of [The New Barbizon Group](#), a celebrated collective of five painters.

The artists works can be found in the following collections: the Jewish Museums in New York, Berlin and Vienna, the Israel Museum in Jerusalem, the Tel Aviv Museum of Art, the Doron Sebbag Art Collection and O.R.S Ltd. Tel Aviv. Her accolades include: the Israeli Ministry of Culture Prize, the Bronner Residency in Düsseldorf, Germany and the Kuenstlerhaus Bethanien Residency in Berlin. Here are images from two of her recent series: The Russian Project (which was exhibited in [The Israel Museum](#) as “Pravda”) and [Soviet Childhood](#).

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New Victims. Courtesy of the artist and Rosenfeld Gallery, Tel Aviv.

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Fucking Hebrew. Courtesy of the artist and Rosenfeld Gallery, Tel Aviv.



They Eat Russian Lard. Courtesy of the artist and Rosenfeld Gallery, Tel Aviv.

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The Chemical Warfare. Courtesy of the artist and Rosenfeld Gallery, Tel Aviv.



School Mobbing. Courtesy of the artist and Rosenfeld Gallery, Tel Aviv.

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Putsch. Courtesy of the artist and Rosenfeld Gallery, Tel Aviv.



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Nunchaku. Courtesy of the artist and Rosenfeld Gallery, Tel Aviv.



Near the Metro. Courtesy of the artist and Rosenfeld Gallery, Tel Aviv.



Jaffa D. Courtesy of the artist and Rosenfeld Gallery, Tel Aviv.

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Itzik. Courtesy of the artist and Rosenfeld Gallery, Tel Aviv.



Girls' Toilet. Courtesy of the artist and Rosenfeld Gallery, Tel Aviv.

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Bamba. Courtesy of the artist and Rosenfeld Gallery, Tel Aviv.

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A Grey Day. Courtesy of the artist and Rosenfeld Gallery, Tel Aviv.



Bread. Courtesy of the artist and Rosenfeld Gallery, Tel Aviv.